

The following is an abbreviated description of the requirements for obtaining a Special Housing Adaptations (SHA) Grant. This pamphlet is not a legal document and should not be considered as such. Nothing in this pamphlet should be construed as changing the law or VA regulations pertaining to specially adapted housing or to special housing adaptations. Only the highlights of the program are covered by this condensed version of VA Pamphlet 26691, Questions and Answers on Specially Adapted Housing and Special Housing Adaptations for Veterans (pending revision). It does not go into detail regarding unusual or complex problems, which conceivably can arise. It is suggested that the pamphlet be read carefully and in its entirety. For more information contact your [local VA Specially Adapted Housing agent](#) from attached list or call the Veterans Service Center at the closest VA office on 1-800-827-1000. Additional information may be obtained from VA Central Office on (202) 273-7355 or 273-7374. You may also download a Veteran's Application for Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) or Special Housing Adaptations (SHA) Grant [here](#). An online application process is under development.

Part 2 Special Housing Adaptations

(This electronic version of VA Pamphlet 26691 was revised December 2006)

Part 2 is designed to answer questions, which may be asked by veterans and their families regarding Special Housing Adaptations for Disabled Veterans under 38 U.S.C., ch.21, sec. 2101(b). The purpose of the law is to furnish disabled veterans of military service, who may be entitled to a grant of assistance from VA, special housing adaptations for their needs due to blindness or the loss or loss of use of both hands or extremities below the elbow. The maximum amount of the grant is currently \$10,000.

Part 2 Special Housing Adaptations

Eligibility & Statutory Requirements

1. What is the governing law relating to special housing adaptations for disabled veterans?

Title 38, United States Codes, chapter 21, section 2101(b). The original statute was Public Law 96385, dated October 7, 1980. Public Law 109-233, 'The Veterans Housing Opportunity and Benefits Act of 2006', dated June 15, 2006, amended Public Law 702 and expands benefit eligibility.

2. Which veterans are basically eligible for the grant?

Veterans who have a service connected disability due to military service entitling them to compensation for permanent and total disability due to:

- a. Blindness in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less or,
- b. The anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands or extremities below the elbow.

3. Is there any time limitation or deadline for applying for the special housing adaptations benefit?

No, there is no time limit on use of the grant.

Special Housing Adaptations Benefit

4. What is the nature of the benefit?

An eligible veteran may receive a VA grant for the actual cost to adapt a house, or for the appraised market value of necessary adapted features already in a house when it was purchased. In either case, the current maximum grant amount is \$10,000. However, PL 109233 authorizes multiple use of grant benefits.

If changes to the governing law provides for an increase in the current maximum grant amount, veterans who have not used assistance available to them up to three times, may be entitled to the increase in the maximum grant amount at that time.

5. How may the grant be used?

(a) Permanent Grant The veteran has the option to use the grant under any one of the following plans:

Plan (1) The veteran may adapt a house which he/she plans to purchase and in which he/she intends to reside.

Plan (2) The veteran may adapt a house, which a member of the veteran's family plans to purchase and in which he/she intends to reside.

Plan (3) The veteran may adapt a house which he/she already owns and in which he/she intends to reside.

Plan (4) The veteran may adapt a house which is already owned by a member of the veteran's family in which he/she intends to reside.

Plan (5) The veteran may purchase a house which has already been adapted with special features which VA has determined are reasonably necessary because of the veteran's disability and in which he/she intends to reside.

Whichever plan is selected; the veteran must either reside in the house or intend to reside in the house.

(b) Temporary Grant Under Public Law 109233, an eligible veteran may request the following optional use of the grant:

A temporary grant (TRA) may be made available to veterans who are/will be temporarily residing in a home owned by a family member. This assistance, up to \$2,000 may be used to adapt the family member's home to meet the veteran's special needs at that time.

6. What is meant by "a member of the veteran's family"?

A member of the veteran's family is defined as a person related by blood, marriage or adoption.

7. If the maximum grant of \$10,000 is not used for special housing adaptations on one house, may a second grant be obtained for the same house or another house?

Yes. Under recent changes to the governing law in accordance with Public Law 109233, the grant, up to a maximum of \$10,000 may be used three times to the aggregate amount allowable, in acquiring a home with adaptations. For example, if the grant amount the first time a veteran used his/her grant was less than the current maximum amount allowable, the difference may be used toward the installation of adaptations in the same home or in another home owned by the veteran or a family member.

8. Is a veteran who obtains a house with special adaptations entitled to exemption from State real estate taxes?

This depends upon the particular State. There are many States that do provide such relief from taxes either in whole or in part. The SAH agent will be able to provide a veteran with more detailed information.

9. What adaptations are considered necessary for a veteran who is blind in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less?

The following adaptations are considered reasonably necessary for a veteran who has blindness in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less:

- (a) Special lighting; e.g., fluorescent, high intensity, open, indirect.
- (b) [Sliding](#) doors. This would include sliding kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors, as well as pedestrian sliding and pocket doors. If it is not possible to adapt existing cabinets with sliding doors, new cabinets with sliding doors are acceptable.
- (c) Handrails. Grab bars are acceptable in the bathroom, but a glass tub enclosure is not.
- (d) Smoke detectors/fire detection systems.
- (e) Security system. This may include the replacement of hollow core exterior (but not interior) doors with solid core doors, deadbolt locks, storm shutters, etc. This may also include an emergency exit; e.g., a level 5 foot x 5 foot platform with stairway and railings.
- (f) Intercom system (without a radio unit).
- (g) Room addition to an existing house to store sensory aids provided by Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service and to store exercise equipment. This may also include the heating and/or cooling of this room, if the heating and/or cooling unit is permanently attached. Built-in storage areas such as shelves are also acceptable.
- (h) Covered porch, in areas of severe inclement weather (maximum size: 6' x 8'). An awning over the front and/or rear doors(s) is acceptable in more moderate climates. A patio or an enclosed patio is unacceptable.
- (i) Swimming pool (but not spas, hot tubs, saunas, etc.)

- (j) [Concrete or asphalt walkways](#) ((but not driveways), if the new walkway involves a new design; e.g., wider or with curbs. However, the replacement of an existing walkway with the same design, only new material, is a maintenance item and is unacceptable.
- (k) Fencing, to overcome a safety hazard; e.g., the property ending at a steep drop or abutting a busy street
- (l) Additional outlets and electrical service capacity to accommodate sensory aids equipment.
- (m) Correction of safety defects or hazardous situations; e.g., replacing space heaters with an electric heat pump or replacing a gas range and oven with an electrical range and oven.
- (n) Other adaptations with the approval of VA.

NOTE: Maintenance and personal property items, new kitchen appliances, new bathroom fixtures, automatic garage door openers, and fireplaces are not usually considered reasonably necessary adaptations because of blindness.

10. What adaptations are considered necessary for a veteran who has lost or lost the use of both hands?

The following adaptations are considered reasonably necessary for a veteran who has the anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands or extremities below the elbow:

- (a) [Lever type fixtures](#) in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- (b) Quad rubber doorknob covers or lever type latches/locks for doors.
- (c) The lowering of cabinets, countertops and sinks.
- (d) d. Light switches: toggle or press system.
- (e) Tap plates to open and close interior doors; keyless entrylock systems for exterior doors.
- (f) Automatic garage door openers.
- (g) Circuit breakers.
- (h) Smoke detectors/fire detection systems.
- (i) Special plumbing fixtures; e.g., bidet.
- (j) Replacement of single or double hung windows with crank-type windows
- (k) Correction of safety defects.
- (l) Other adaptations with the approval of VA

How To Apply For Benefits

11. Where does a veteran go to find out if he/she is eligible for a special housing adaptations benefit?

Any VA office but preferably the [VA office where the veteran's claim records are located](#). The toll free number is 1-800-827-1000.

12. Is the veteran advised that he/she is eligible for special housing adaptations?

A notice of eligibility will be sent to the veteran from the VA. A VA Specially Adapted Housing agent will visit the veteran and counsel him/her in every way possible in using the grant. He/she will be furnished a [supplemental application form](#) (VA Form 264555d, Veteran's Supplemental Application for Assistance in Acquiring Specially Adapted Housing) to be filled out when he/she is ready to obtain the grant.

When the veteran's request for the grant is approved, he/she will receive a commitment letter from VA setting forth the terms and conditions under which the funds will be made available. Any contract executed by the veteran must include the condition that it is subject to VA approval and his/her obtaining the grant.

13. Is life insurance available which would pay off the mortgage on a specially adapted house in case the veteran dies before repaying the loan?

Yes. Most veterans who receive a specially adapted housing grant are eligible for [Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance \(VMLI\)](#) covering the unpaid principal, not to exceed \$90,000 on the mortgage loan. VA representatives will explain this program and assist eligible veterans in applying for this protection. VMLI can only be issued to veteran's age 69 and younger. Once issued, VMLI will remain in effect, regardless of age, if there is mortgage indebtedness. Questions concerning VMLI should be directed to the Insurance Center located in Philadelphia on (800) 669-8477.

Other Similar Benefits

14. Are there other benefits similar to housing adaptations to which a disabled veteran may be entitled?

Yes, an eligible veteran may be entitled to the Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) grant benefit, which has a maximum limitation of **\$4,100**. The Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service will furnish additional information concerning this benefit upon request (including how to file VA Form 10-0103, Veterans Application for Assistance in Acquiring Home Improvement and Structural Alterations).

15. If a veteran has already received a grant for a wheelchair home, may he/she also receive a grant for special housing adaptations?

No. Once a veteran has received a grant for a wheelchair home, he/she is no longer eligible for the special housing adaptations benefit.

16. If a veteran receives a grant for special housing adaptations and the veteran's physical condition changes to later qualify him/her for a wheelchair home, may the veteran then become eligible for a grant for a wheelchair home?

Yes. If a veteran receives a grant for special housing adaptations and the veteran's physical condition changes to later qualify him/her for a wheelchair home, the veteran would be entitled to the full grant for a wheelchair home, as provided by law.

NOTE: Part II of VA Pamphlet 26691 (pending revision), Questions and Answers on Specially Adapted Housing and Special Housing Adaptations, will soon be available in Braille, in a large print booklet, and on an audiocassette tape. To obtain a copy of this alternative media, please contact the [Specially Adapted Housing agent](#) at the nearest VA Regional Loan Center or office.